

THE *George Astor*
NATURE, DESIGN,
AND
GENERAL RULES,
OF THE
United Societies,
IN
*London, Bristol, King's-wood,
and Newcastle upon Tyne.*



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R U L E S, &c.
O F T H E
U N I T E D S O C I E T I E S.

1.  N the latter End of the Year 1739, eight or ten Persons came to me in *London*, who appeared to be deeply convinced of Sin, and earnestly groaning for Redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next Day) that I would spend some Time with them in Prayer, and advise them how to flee from the Wrath to come; which they saw continually hanging over their Heads. That we might have more Time for this great Work, I appointed a Day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every Week, namely on *Thursday*, in the Evening. To these, and as many more as desired

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to join with them, (for their Number increased daily) I gave those Advices from Time to Time which I judged most needful for them; and we always concluded our Meeting with Prayer suited to their several Necessities.

2. This was the Rise of the UNITED SOCIETY, first at *London*, and then in other Places. Such a Society is no other than “*a Company of Men having the Form, and seeking the Power of Godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the Word of Exhortation, and to watch over one another in Love, that they may help each other to work out their Salvation.*”

3. That it may the more easily be discern'd, whether they are indeed working out their own Salvation, each Society is divided into smaller Companies, called Classes, according to their respective Places of abode. There are about twelve Persons in every Class; one of whom is stiled *The Leader*. It is his Business

I. To see each Person in his Class, once a Week at the least; in order

To receive what they are willing to give, toward the Relief of the Poor;

To

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To enquire how their Souls prosper?

To advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as Occasion may require.

II. To meet the Minister and the Stewards of the Society once a Week; in order

To pay in to the Stewards what they have receiv'd of their several Classes in the Week preceeding;

To shew their Account of what each Person has contributed; And

To inform the Minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reprov'd.

4. There is one only Condition previously required, in those who desire Admission into these Societies, *a Desire to flee from the Wrath to come, to be saved from their Sins*: But, wherever this is really fix'd in the Soul, it will be shewn by its Fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their Desire of Salvation,

First, By doing no Harm, by avoiding Evil in every kind; especially, that which is most generally practis'd. Such is

The taking the Name of God in vain;

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The profaning the Day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary Work thereon, or by buying or selling:

Drunkenness, *Buying or selling Spirituous Liquors*; or *drinking them* (unless in Cases of extreme Necessity:)

Fighting, Quarrelling, Brawling; Going to Law, Returning Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing: The using many Words in buying or selling.

The *buying or selling uncustom'd Goods*:

The *giving or taking Things on Usury: Uncharitable or unprofitable Conversation*:

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us:

Doing what we know is not for the Glory of God: As

The *putting on of Gold or costly Apparel*.

The *taking such Diversions* as cannot be used in the Name of the Lord Jesus:

The *Singing those Songs, or reading those Books*, which do not tend to the Knowledge or Love of God:

Softness, and needless Self indulgence:
Laying up Treasures upon Earth.

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5. It is expected of all who continue in these Societies, that they should continue to evidence their Desire of Salvation,

Secondly, By doing Good, by being in every kind, merciful after their Power; as they have Opportunity, doing Good of every possible sort, and as far as is possible, to all Men:

To their Bodies, of the Ability which GOD giveth, by giving Food to the Hungry, by cloathing the Naked, by visiting or helping them that are Sick, or in Prison:

To their Souls, by instructing, *reproving* or exhorting all we have any Intercourse with: Trampling under Foot that Enthusiastick Doctrine of Devils, that "we are not to do Good, unless *our Heart be free to it.*"

By doing Good especially to them that are of the Household of Faith, or groaning so to be: Employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in Business; and that so much the more, because the World will love its own, and them only.

By

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By all possible *Diligence and Frugality*, that the Gospel be not blamed:

By running with Patience the Race that is set before them; *denying themselves, and taking up their Cross daily*; submitting to bear the Reproach of Christ, to be as the Filth and Off-scouring of the World; and looking that Men should *say all manner of Evil of them falsely, for their Lord's sake*:

6. It is expected of all who desire to continue in these Societies, that they should continue to evidence their Desire of Salvation,

Thirdly, By attending upon all the Ordinances of GOD: Such are

The publick Worship of GOD;

The Ministry of the Word, either read or expounded;

The Supper of the LORD;

Private Prayer;

Searching the Scriptures; and

Fasting, or Abstinence.

7. These are the General Rules of our Societies; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written Word, the only Rule, and the sufficient Rule both of our Faith and Practice: And all these we know his Spirit writes

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writes on every truly awaken'd Heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any one of them, let it be made known unto him who watches over that Soul, as one that must give Account. I will admonish him of the Error of his Ways: I will bear with him for a Season. But if then he repent not, he hath no more Place among us. We have deliver'd our own Souls.

JOHN WESLEY.

Feb. 23. 1742-3.

A PRAYER for those who are convinced of Sin.

1. **O** Most compassionate High Priest,
Full of all Grace we know thou art,
Faith puts its Hand upon thy Breast,
And feels beneath thy panting Heart.
2. Thy panting Heart for Sinners bleeds;
Thy Mercies and Compassions move;
Thy groaning Spirit interceeds,
And yearn the Bowels of thy Love.
3. Hear then the Pleading Spirit's Prayer,
(The Spirit's Will to thee is known)
For all who now thy Sufferings share,
And still for full Redemption groan.
4. Poor tempted Souls, with Tempests toss'd,
And Strangers to a Moment's Peace;
Disconsolate, afflicted, lost,
Lost in a howling Wilderness.
5. Torn with an endless War within,
Vex'd with the Flesh and Spirit's Strife,
And struggling in the Toils of Sin,
And agonizing into Life.
6. O let the Pris'ners mournful Cries,
As Incense in thy Sight appear;
Their humble Wailings pierce the Skies,
If hap'ly they may feel thee near!
7. The Captive Exiles make their Moans,
From Sin impatient to be free;
Call home, call home thy banish'd ones!
Lead Captive their Captivity!
8. Shew them the Blood that bought their Peace,
The Anchor of their steadfast Hope;
And bid their guilty Terrors cease,
And bring the ransom'd Pris'ners up.
9. Out of the Deep regard their Cries,
The Fallen raise, the Mourners cheer;
O Sun of Righteousness arise,
And scatter all their Doubt and Fear!

10. Pity

10. Pity the Day of feeble Things;
 O gather ev'ry halting Soul,
 And drop Salvation from thy Wings,
 And make the contrite Sinner whole.
11. Stand by them in the fiery Hour,
 Their Feebleness of Mind defend;
 And in their Weakness shew thy Power,
 And make them patient to the End.
12. O satisfy their Soul in Drought;
 Give them thy saving Health to see,
 And let thy Mercy find them out;
 And let thy Mercy reach to me.
13. Hast thou the Work of Grace begun,
 And brought them to the Birth in vain?
 O let thy Children see the Sun!
 Let all their Souls be born again.
14. Relieve the Souls whose Cross we bear,
 For whom thy suff'ring Members mourn;
 Answer our Faith's effectual Prayer:
 Bid ev'ry struggling Child be born.
15. Hark how thy Turtle Dove complains,
 And see us weep for Sion's Woe!
 Pity thy suff'ring People's Pains;
 Avenge us of our inbred Foe.
16. Whom thou has bound, O Lord, expell,
 And take his Armour all away;
 The Man of Sin, the Child of Hell,
 The Devil in our Nature slay.
17. Him and his Works at once destroy,
 The *Being* of all Sin erase,
 And turn our Mourning into Joy,
 And cloath us with the Robes of Praise.
18. Then, when our Suff'rings all are past,
 O let us pure and perfect be,
 And gain our Calling's Prize at last,
 For ever sanctified in thee.

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